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AUTHOR Cooper, James G.
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ABSTRACT

The self-images of 407 Anglo American, 157 American Indian, 300 Mexican American, and 52 Negro rural high school students in New Mexico and Texas were compared in this study. Data from an 11-item semantic differential test were grouped in terms of 3 subsets: perceptions of self, feelings about school, and social variables. Although it had been expected that the study would reveal strong perceptions of self among the Anglo Americans and weak self-concepts among the ethnic minorities, the data revealed that each ethnic group saw itself in favorable light and saw the other groups less favorably. In the document, tables of means (by ethnic group) provide results of the bipolar-adjectives test. A list of participating schools is also included. (PS)

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Perception of Self and Others as a Function of Ethnic Group Membership

James G. Cooper, Professor of Research
College of Education,
University of New Mexico

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Education in the Southwest faces many complex problems, not the least of which stem from its complex student bodies, student bodies that reflect the three ethnic groups of Anglo (White), Native American (Indian), and Chicano (Spanish-American). During the past years, Negroes have slowly immigrated so that a fourth element is appearing. It has become almost commonplace for educators to assume that the minority groups suffer deflated or impaired concepts of self, largely due to abrasive cultural conflicts with the majority group. This widespread conviction has led to the establishment of countless numbers of special courses, "Headstarts," institutes, cultural awareness movements, for the express purpose of strengthening these "Damaged" self-concepts.

It was the purpose of this research to discover the actuality of these self-concepts and perceptions of others. That is, we expected to find strong perceptions of self and of others among our Anglo groups, but diminished functions among members of the minority groups. We expected further, to find an ordering of strengths, with Chicanos stronger than either Negroes, or Indians. We expected to find Indians at the bottom of the conceptual pile.

The research plan included developing a definition of "self-concept," devising means for collecting data, securing cooperation from schools, analyzing the data, and interpreting the data.

Significance of the Project

As mentioned above, it has become an accepted principle that self-concept among minority groups is diminished. If it can be demonstrated that such is not the case, then educational effort can be addressed to other possible areas as we seek to find ways and means for improving educational practice with these and other groups. Also, this investigation might disclose problem areas previously overlooked. If so, then methods need be devised for coping with such problems. If, of course, if it is true that self-concept in minority groups is "squashed," then we must surely find methods and approaches for dealing with these situations.

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Self-Concept

Self-concept has long been felt to be a significant portion of the child's learning equipment. It has been reasoned that the learner who feels that he is inadequate, disliked by significant others (peers, school authorities, the community), and the school system, that this learner has several strikes against him. The argument has much going for it, since it is well-known that our ethnic minority groups have not succeeded in the typical school. Evidence has accumulated to show that the presence of ethnic groups in school systems is also accompanied by higher drop-out rates, lower graduation rates, lower achievement scores, and other symptoms of educational illness.

We defined self-concept to include the respondent's reactions to selected elements from his school and community environment. These elements comprised:

1. Me as a student
2. Teachers
3. Opportunities for making friends
4. Indian Students
5. The grading system
6. Chicano Students
7. Social Activities
8. White Students (Anglos)
9. Community Acceptance of Me
10. Black Students
11. Me

Reactions to the foregoing concepts were secured by means of 11 sets of bi-polar adjectives: Good-bad, Sharp-dull, Ugly-beautiful, Strong-weak, Slow-fast, Shallow-deep, Effective-ineffective, Valuable-worthless, Unfair-fair, Intelligent-stupid, and Dishonest-honest.

It should be noted that the above concepts and sets of adjectives operationally defined self-concept as including the three sub-sets of feelings about self, feelings about school, and feelings about social factors, i.e., the community. These concepts also permitted us to examine how each ethnic group was perceived by members of the other groups.

Data Collection

Instrumentation

The eleven concepts were set into the format of a semantic differential test. The eleven sets of bi-polar adjectives were randomly assigned so that the polarities were mixed. In the event, we found that this method of random reversals yielded 6 items with positive loadings on the left hand member, e.g., Good-bad, Effective-ineffective, and 5 with positive loadings on the right hand side, e.g., Ugly-beautiful, Dishonest-honest.

The respondent was asked to read the concept, and then to show how he felt by putting an X in the appropriate space. For each bi-polar adjective, 7 possible responses were available. The number "1" was placed on the left hand member of a given pair. The numbers then increased in steps of one until the number 7 and the other end of the pair was reached. Here's an example:

Strong 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Weak

The numbers did not appear on the test; the above is to show how the instrument was scored. The fact that 5 items were "reversed" meant that in data analysis, scorers and analyists needed to keep their wits about them in order to avoid serious error.

Each concept was placed two to a page; each had its set of 11 bi-polar adjectives.

Each pupil was asked to indicate his ethnic membership, grade-level, school size, sex, and name of school. He was NOT asked to disclose his name.

Sample

A sample of high schools in rural New Mexico was initially selected. These schools contained almost no Negroes, so two schools in rural Texas, near Houston, were selected, because they contained sizable numbers of Negro pupils. These two schools were integrated, and in addition to Negroes, contained Anglos and Chicanos. New Mexico schools do include Negro pupils, but they are concentrated in a few urban centers. We did not wish to confound our already complex problem with the inclusion of big city schools and their attendent problems of ghettos, extreme poverty, and the like. We felt that limiting the sample to rural, somewhat isolated schools would partially homogenize the sample with respect to socio-economic variables.

School administrators were reached by telephone, letter, and personal visit. The final sample comprised 14 schools in New Mexico, and 2 in Texas (Only one school, in New Mexico, refrained from participating). The ethnic composition of the sample was: Anglo-407, Chicano-300, Indian-157, and Negro-52.

The tests were delivered to the schools and administered by local staff during the spring of 1971. The data analysis included keypunching, computer runs, and the like. We secured means, variances, etc., for each variable, for each ethnic group.

Presentation of Data

The data are presented according to each of our three major headings: Ratings of self, ratings of school, and rating of social variables. Each data set reveals how each ethnic group reacted to the various concepts and to their sets of bi-polar adjectives.

Perceptions of Self

Perceptions of self were measured by three concepts: "Me As a Student," "Me", and the rating given by each ethnic group to its own member, e.g., "Chicanos." "Me As a Student" data appear in Table 1. The table shows that our 407 Anglo high school seniors scored on the "Good" end of the scale, since their mean of 2.9 tends toward the left hand side (a score of "4" lies in the middle; scores of 5 or 6 reflect feelings toward the right hand or "bad" side of the set). Similarly, the table shows that Chicanos scored the same as the Anglos. Indians were slightly less favorably disposed, and Negroes were very positive in the set, as shown by their mean of 2.3. The table shows further, that all 4 groups tended to perceive themselves in a favorable light. Certain anticipated reversals took place, e.g., bi-polar sets 3. Ugly-beautiful, and 9. Unfair-fair. (The others are sets 5, 6, and 11). These anticipated reversals lend an aura of validity to the data.

The data of Table 1 also reflect the strong, positive ratings given by Negroes. These Negroes perceived themselves as being good, sharp, beautiful, strong, fast, deep, effective, valuable, fair, intelligent, and honest. The other three groups possessed similar, positive feelings about themselves.

The perceptions of the four groups for the concept, "Me" are reported in Table 2. The data repeat the trends just noted above. That is, Negro pupils saw themselves in a highly positive manner; these feelings were pretty much echoed by the other three groups. It should be noted that Indian students were somewhat more restrained in their assessments of self, although they, too, were positive in their appraisals. The Anglos and the Chicanos gave similar, positive self-reports.

A third assessment of each group's perception of itself comes from analyses of the responses to the 4 ethnic concepts. Each group was asked to rate its own ethnic group; the findings are disclosed in Table 3. This table shows that Negroes perceived themselves most favorably. They were followed by the Chicanos, Anglos, and Indians (the difference between Anglos and Indians of .1 lacks significance). Again, we find that all four groups perceived themselves in a favorable light; the only possible exception might be the Indian mean of 4.1 to the bi-polar pair, Shallow-deep.

Perception of School

Perception of school was measured by two concepts: 2. Teachers, and 5. The Grading System. The findings are revealed in tables 4 and 5. The sets of ratings are far more restrained than those earlier reported. That is, teachers and grading systems did not evoke sharp reactions of pleasure, but neither did we find severely negative reactions. Since most ratings were in the 3.5 to 4.5 range, we might conclude that ambivalent, or "just plain vanilla" feelings were expressed. Negroes were more favorably disposed toward teachers, followed by Indians. Indians tended to see the grading system in a more favorable light, but even they reacted negatively here and there (sets 2, 3, 5, 6, and 9). Anglo reactions were most negative of the 4 groups.

1. Me As A Student

		Means by Ethnic Group*			
		Anglo N = 407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N = 157	Negro N = 52
1.	Good-bad	2.9	2.9	3.1	2.3
2.	Sharp-dull	3.0	3.3	3.6	2.6
3.	Ugly-beautiful	4.5	4.4	4.4	5.1
4.	Strong-weak	3.2	3.2	3.4	2.7
5.	Slow-fast	4.9	4.7	4.4	5.2
6.	Shallow-deep	4.8	4.4	4.2	4.6
7.	Effective-ineffective	3.0	3.0	3.3	2.5
8.	Valuable-worthless	2.9	2.9	3.3	2.2
9.	Unfair-fair	5.7	5.5	5.2	6.1
10.	Intelligent-stupid	2.3	2.9	3.2	1.9
11.	Dishonest-honest	5.7	5.6	5.2	6.4

*Note: Lower means are associated with the left hand member, and higher means relate to the right hand member of each set of bi-polar adjectives.

TABLE 1

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11. Me

		Means by Ethnic Groups*			
		Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N = 157	Negro N=52
1.	Good-bad	2.6	2.4	2.9	2.0
2.	Sharp-dull	2.7	2.7	3.2	2.0
3.	Ugly-beautiful	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.6
4.	Strong-weak	3.0	3.0	3.1	2.4
5.	Slow-fast	5.1	5.1	4.7	5.5
6.	Shallow-deep	5.1	4.8	4.2	5.2
7.	Effective-ineffective	2.7	2.7	3.2	2.0
8.	Valuable-worthless	2.7	2.7	3.0	1.9
9.	Unfair-fair	5.7	5.8	5.1	6.3
10.	Intelligent-stupid	2.6	2.6	3.1	1.6
11.	Dishonest-honest	5.7	5.8	5.2	6.5

*Note: Low means are assocated with the left hand member, and higher means relate to the right hand member of each set of bi-polar adjectives.

TABLE 2

When Ethnic Groups Rate Themselves

Bi-Polar Adjective	Means by Ethnic Group*			
	Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N = 157	Negro N=52
1. Good-bad	2.4	2.0	2.4	1.8
2. Sharp-dull	2.7	2.6	2.9	2.2
3. Ugly-beautiful	5.0	5.2	5.1	6.2
4. Strong-weak	3.0	2.5	2.7	2.0
5. Slow-fast	5.0	5.2	4.7	5.7
6. Shallow-deep	4.7	4.7	4.1	5.0
7. Efficient-inefficient	2.7	2.6	3.1	2.0
8. Valuable-worthless	2.5	2.3	2.6	1.6
9. Unfair-fair	4.8	5.5	5.0	6.0
10. Intelligent-stupid	2.7	2.6	3.0	2.0
11. Dishonest-honest	4.9	5.4	5.0	5.9
Composite (adjusted for polar reversals)	2.9	2.6	3.0	2.1

*Note: Lower numbers are associated with the left hand member, and higher scores relate to the right hand member of each set of bi-polar adjectives.

TABLE 3

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2. Teachers

	Means by Ethnic Group*			
	Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N = 157	Negro N = 52
1. Good-bad	3.4	3.3	3.1	3.1
2. Sharp-dull	3.6	3.4	3.1	2.8
3. Ugly-beautiful	3.8	4.0	4.3	4.2
4. Strong-weak	3.8	3.6	3.5	2.8
5. Slow-fast	4.3	4.4	4.3	5.2
6. Shallow-deep	4.3	4.2	4.0	4.8
7. Effective-ineffective	3.4	3.3	3.4	2.7
8. Valuable-worthless	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.3
9. Unfair-fair	4.4	4.5	4.9	4.5
10. Intelligent-stupid	2.9	2.6	2.7	2.1
11. Dishonest-honest	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.1

TABLE 4

Perceptions of Social Variables

Three concepts tapped the social domain. They were "Opportunities for Making Friends," "Social Activities," and "Community Acceptance of Me". All four groups gave favorable reactions to the concept of opportunities for making friends, as indicated in Table 6. The table shows that Negro respondents gave the most favorable responses, with Indian trailing the others in a few of the adjective sets (e.g., 5, 6, 7, 8). The similarities between Anglo, Chicano, and Indian groups are more marked than are their differences.

Somewhat similar reactions were found for the concept, "Social Activities." Negores supplied consistantly favorable responses. The Anglo, Chicano, and Indian groups were more restrained, although all three were positive in their expressed perceptions. Table 7 reveals these data.

Community acceptance was perceived most favorably by the Negro pupils, as disclosed in Table 8. The other three groups gave similar, less enthusiastic responses. In 4 adjective sets, Indians were least favorably impressed. On the other 7, however, Indian responses were comparable with Anglo responses.

Perceptions of Others

Each group was asked to appraise each of the other ethnic groups. The resultant data are shown in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12. The tables show that each group perceived itself in a highly favorable light. They also show that each group tended to look down upon other groups. This tendency was most pronounced in the Anglo group's perceptions of Indian Students (Table 9) and Negro Students (Table 11). With some exceptions, Indian Students tended to perceive the other groups in the most favorable light.

Conclusions

The 12th grade pupils in this study reflected positive concepts of self, and of various environmental elements. They perceived themselves favorably vis-a-vis the school, community, and in relation to other groups. The latter was quite pronounced: each ethnic group saw itself in favorable light. They saw the other groups less favorably.

These data fail to support the contention that ethnic minorities are crippled by the possession of weak, or inappropriate self-concepts.

The data do suggest some interesting problems. First, how is it that our 52 Negro pupils consistantly supplied the most positive self-concepts? These pupils came from two rural schools near Houston, Texas, an area not noted for cordiality between its major ethnic groups. Further, these Negro pupils rated "Indian Students" quite positively. However, it is doubtful whether these Negroes have come into contact with Indians. The possibility that stereotypes of some sort were involved cannot be dismissed.

5. The Grading System

		Means by Ethnic Groups			
		Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N =157	Negro N= 52
1.	Good-bad	3.9	3.5	3.5	4.0
2.	Sharp-dull	4.2	3.8	3.7	3.8
3.	Ugly-beautiful	3.4	3.8	4.0	3.7
4.	Strong-weak	4.1	3.6	3.6	3.8
5.	Slow-fast	3.7	4.0	4.1	3.9
6.	Shallow-deep	3.5	3.9	3.9	4.3
7.	Effective-ineffective	3.8	3.3	3.6	3.7
8.	Valuable-worthless	3.9	3.4	3.4	4.1
9.	Unfair-fair	3.9	4.3	4.5	3.6
10.	Intelligent-stupid	4.1	3.6	3.6	3.8
11.	Dishonest-honest	4.2	4.5	4.6	3.9

TABLE 5

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3. Opportunities for Making Friends

		Means by Ethnic Groups			
		Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N =157	Negro N= 52
1.	Good-bad	2.6	2.4	2.6	1.9
2.	Sharp-dull	3.1	2.9	3.0	2.3
3.	Ugly-beautiful	4.7	4.8	4.9	5.5
4.	Strong-weak	3.2	3.0	3.1	2.5
5.	Slow-fast	4.7	4.8	4.6	5.3
6.	Shallow-deep	4.4	4.5	4.2	4.7
7.	Effective-ineffective	3.0	2.8	3.2	2.5
8.	Valuable-worthless	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.2
9.	Unfair-fair	5.2	5.5	5.3	5.8
10.	Intelligent-stupid	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.1
11.	Dishonest-honest	5.2	5.5	5.2	6.0

TABLE 6

7. Social Activities

		Means by Ethnic Groups			
		Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N= 157	Negro N- 52
1.	Good-bad	3.3	3.3	3.4	2.8
2.	Sharp-dull	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.1
3.	Ugly-beautiful	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.8
4.	Strong-weak	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.3
5.	Slow-fast	4.2	3.9	4.0	4.3
6.	Shallow-deep	4.0	3.8	3.8	4.3
7.	Effective-ineffective	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.0
8.	Valuable-worthless	3.2	3.2	3.4	2.9
9.	Unfair-fair	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.6
10.	Intelligent-stupid	3.6	3.5	3.5	2.9
11.	Dishonest-honest	4.5	4.7	4.6	5.0

TABLE 7

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9. Community Acceptance of Me

		Means by Ethnic Groups			
		Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N =157	Negro N.=52
1.	Good-bad	3.1	2.8	2.9	2.3
2.	Sharp-dull	3.3	3.1	3.3	2.7
3.	Ugly-beautiful	4.5	4.6	4.6	5.3
4.	Strong-weak	3.3	3.1	3.3	2.8
5.	Slow-fast	4.4	4.6	4.4	5.0
6.	Shallow-deep	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.8
7.	Effective-ineffective	3.2	3.0	3.4	2.6
8.	Valuable-worthless	3.1	3.0	3.2	2.3
9.	Unfair-fair	4.8	5.0	4.8	5.4
10.	Intelligent-stupid	3.2	3.1	3.2	2.3
11.	Dishonest-honest	4.9	5.1	4.8	5.6

TABLE 8

4. Indian Students

	Means by Ethnic Groups			
	Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N = 157	Negro N = 52
1. Good-bad	3.1	3.0	2.4	2.7
2. Sharp-dull	3.6	3.4	2.9	3.3
3. Ugly-beautiful	4.2	4.3	5.1	5.0
4. Strong-weak	3.3	3.3	2.7	2.8
5. Slow-fast	4.2	4.2	4.7	4.7
6. Shallow-deep	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.5
7. Effective-ineffective	3.6	3.6	3.1	3.2
8. Valuable-worthless	3.3	3.2	2.6	3.0
9. Unfair-fair	4.5	4.8	5.0	5.3
10. Intelligent-stupid	3.5	3.4	3.0	2.9
11. Dishonest-honest	4.5	4.6	5.0	5.3

TABLE 9

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6. Chicano Students

	Means by Ethnic Groups			
	Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N =157	Negro N =52
1. Good-bad	3.4	2.0	3.6	2.6
2. Sharp-dull	3.8	2.6	3.6	3.4
3. Ugly-beautiful	4.2	5.2	4.4	4.7
4. Strong-weak	3.6	2.5	3.6	3.1
5. Slow-fast	3.8	5.2	4.2	4.3
6. Shallow-deep	3.7	4.7	4.0	4.4
7. Effective-ineffective	3.8	2.6	3.7	3.1
8. Valuable-worthless	3.5	2.3	3.8	3.1
9. Unfair-fair	4.1	5.5	4.2	5.1
10. Intelligent-stupid	3.9	2.6	3.6	2.9
11. Dishonest-honest	3.9	5.4	4.1	5.0

TABLE 10

8. White Students (Anglos)

	Means by Ethnic Groups			
	Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N =157	Negro N= 52
1. Good-bad	2.4	3.3	3.2	3.8
2. Sharp-dull	2.7	3.3	3.3	3.7
3. Ugly-beautiful	5.0	4.3	4.6	4.0
4. Strong-weak	3.0	3.6	3.6	3.8
5. Slow-fast	5.0	4.5	4.5	4.3
6. Shallow-deep	4.7	4.1	4.0	4.0
7. Effective-ineffective	2.7	3.3	3.6	3.5
8. Valuable-worthless	2.5	3.4	3.5	3.4
9. Unfair-fair	4.8	4.2	4.6	4.0
10. Intelligent-stupid	2.7	3.3	3.2	3.6
11. Dishonest-honest	4.9	4.2	4.7	3.9

TABLE 11

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10. Black Students

	Means by Ethnic Groups			
	Anglo N=407	Chicano N = 300	Indian N= 157	Negro N= 52
1. Good-bad	3.6	2.9	2.9	1.8
2. Sharp-dull	3.9	3.2	3.1	2.2
3. Ugly-beautiful	3.7	4.3	4.6	6.2
4. Strong-weak	3.7	2.9	3.0	2.0
5. Slow-fast	4.0	4.7	4.8	5.7
6. Shallow-deep	3.8	4.2	4.0	5.0
7. Effective-ineffective	3.8	3.2	3.3	2.0
8. Valuable-worthless	3.6	3.1	3.2	1.6
9. Unfair-fair	3.9	4.7	4.8	6.0
10. Intelligent-stupid	4.0	3.2	3.1	2.0
11. Dishonest-honest	3.9	4.7	4.8	5.9

TABLE 12

Similar data occurred in the Indian and Chicano samples. These pupils probably have had limited, if any, contacts with Negro pupils (it was noted earlier that very few Negroes are found in rural New Mexico, where most of the data were gathered). The Chicano and Indian perceptions of Negro pupils were favorable for the most part. Only the Anglos provided the more traditional views toward Negroes. And yet, even though this group was less favorable than the other two, the absolute values ranged from somewhat positive to neutral, which supports a conculusion that acute prejudice was not found.

Throughout the data, we found that Indian pupils were somewhat less positive toward temselves. This may relate to at least two sets of our bi-polar adjectives: "Slow-fast," and "Shallow-deep". Indians tended to use middle ratings for these (3.4) suggesting the possibility that meaningful referents for the concepts are not available in their cultures (Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache Indians were included).

Finally, we raise the point, that since self-concept appeared relatively robust across the ethnic groups studied, we must look elsewhere for inadequate educational performance for our ethnic minorities. Dropout rates, absence rates, lower achievement levels, are probably related to variables other than those of perceptions of self and of others as defined in this study.

List of Participating Schools

New Mexico

Bloomfield
Carrizozo
Cuba
Demming
Dulce
Hot Springs(TorC)
Laguna-Acoma
Lordsburg
Mora
Pecos
Shiprock
Moriarty
Tularosa
Jemez Valley

Texas

Lamar (Rosenberg)
Wharton